

The PCFA Young Investigator Grant Program

Policies & Procedures 2009 Application Round

More information regarding the PCFA Grant Program
can be found in the Research section of the PCFA
website: <http://www.prostate.org.au/>

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1 Introduction

The Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia (PCFA) is the peak body for prostate cancer in Australia. The Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia mission is to reduce the impact of prostate cancer on Australian families through:

- Helping men deal with the diagnosis and treatment of prostate cancer
- Funding research into prostate cancer and
- Raising awareness about prostate cancer in the general community.

2 Purpose of the Research Program

The PCFA recognizes that current strategies for the prevention, diagnosis and management of prostate cancer are inadequate, and that progress in these areas requires research as well as measures to make scientifically-rigorous clinical trials accessible to patients with prostate cancer. Australia has a vigorous and internationally-recognized cadre of medical researchers, and the PCFA wishes to encourage and support their interest in prostate cancer research through a research grants program.

The main goals of the PCFA Research Program are:

- To encourage young investigators to undertake research into prostate cancer, and to support those investigators as they mature toward independent scientists.
- To stimulate senior scientists, not working in the field of prostate cancer, to bring innovative proposals to the PCFA; funding will be provided to obtain the preliminary data needed for NH&MRC or other grant submissions.
- To encourage rigorous proposals for research that will provide direct, tangible benefits to patients with prostate cancer in a relatively-short timeframe.
- To fund equipment purchases which will facilitate innovative research in prostate cancer.

3 Research Priorities of the PCFA

- Discovery of the genetic and cellular factors which initiate and/or perpetuate prostate cancer
- Discovery, development and clinical validation of new, non-invasive tests to detect prostate cancer, and/or to determine whether a patient's cancer is curable.
- Discovery, development and clinical validation of new biomarkers that predict the future clinical course of prostate cancer and/or the response to future chemotherapy
- Discovery, development and preclinical and clinical validation of novel molecular targets for chemotherapy of locally-invasive or metastatic prostate cancer, including androgen-independent cancers
- Development of new treatment strategies for prostate cancer, especially locally-invasive or metastatic cancers
- Projects which if successful are likely to provide improvements in the quality of life of patients with prostate cancer

These priorities are referred to by Research Committee members as they assess grant applications. Consider outlining in your application how your proposal will address one or more of these priorities.

4 Objective

The objective of the Young Investigator Grant program of the PCFA is to stimulate junior scientists with at least 2 and usually less than 7 years of active research following a doctoral or other research degree, **already working in the field of prostate cancer** and with a distinguished career relative to opportunity to bring innovative proposals to the PCFA. The intent is to provide such Young Investigators with four years of secure funding that will allow them to become independent and to continue their prostate cancer research. These grants will generally be funded for no more than four years.

The PCFA does not view itself as a source of long-term funding of an individual investigator's research. Rather it sees two roles for its funding. The first is "catalytic" – **funding work which will allow the project, and/or the investigator, to be funded ultimately by grant programs more oriented towards long-term funding, such as those of the NH&MRC.** Secondly, the PCFA wishes to fund "gap" projects which are of significance for patients with prostate cancer but which fall outside the funding parameters of traditional funding bodies. These latter projects will necessarily be relatively short-term in nature.

5 Description of Young Investigator Grants

A PCFA Young Investigator Grant is a funding agreement with an eligible Australian institution to enable an individual researcher, supported in some cases by a mentor and a group of co-investigators, to undertake a scientific investigation and to develop their career to the point where they may become independent scientists with an interest in prostate cancer.

While a Young Investigator Grant specifies financial support for an individual researcher working on a specified topic, the institution is responsible for administration of the award and accepts financial responsibility for the grant. The institution is also responsible for providing basic infrastructure support (e.g. office, phone, computer & internet access, laboratory space) to those involved in the research project.

This document is intended to assist researchers who are considering applying for PCFA Young Investigator Grant support. It provides advice on access and eligibility criteria, the review process, application processes, ethics requirements, provision of funding and administration of grants.

6 Confidentiality

Information contained in applications is regarded as in-confidence unless otherwise stated and will be received and treated as in-confidence by the PCFA. It is the responsibility of all PCFA Research Committee members, and persons assisting these Committees, not to disclose to any person confidential information to which they become privy as a result of the exercise of their responsibilities to the PCFA.

Information comprising the names of successful grant applicants and their administering institutions, together with the title of the research project and the funding awarded, are published in the PCFA Annual Report and are available through the PCFA's website. The PCFA may also release information about the areas of research of the grant and a brief description of the grant provided by the applicant in response to the question on the application form designated as *Lay Summary*.

7 Privacy

Documents containing personal information are handled and protected in accordance with the provisions of the *Privacy Act 1988*, which sets standards for the collection, storage, use and disclosure of, and access to, personal information. Personal information is disclosed only with permission of the individual to whom it relates or where the Act allows.

8 Eligibility

PCFA Young Investigator Grants are available to all junior investigators working in not-for-profit or for-profit institutions. The PCFA awards applications on the basis of merit, and does not discriminate on the basis of nationality, religion, race, sexual orientation, disability or any other irrelevant characteristic of the investigator or the institution applying.

Multiple applications from the same investigator are strongly discouraged. Applicants should submit their most promising work as a single proposal. Likewise if the Young Investigator is named as a Co-Investigator on another proposal, any potential for overlap should be explained.

See 9.4 below regarding the ineligibility of institutions or investigators receiving funding from tobacco companies.

8.1 Principal Investigator

Applicants will normally have at least 2 and less than 7 years post-doctoral experience working on prostate cancer unless exceptional circumstances exist (see exceptional circumstances below).

Applicants must demonstrate that they will have access to the facilities needed for the proposed research and will be in a research environment that will support their development in accordance with the aims of this grant. It is also strongly recommended that they have a mentor who can guide their research and the development of their careers. Members of the PCFA Research Committee may be able to suggest possible mentors if the candidate is unaware of a suitable person.

The Principal Investigator must be an Australian citizen or hold permanent residency in Australia and must be based in Australia for the duration of the grant.

The Principal Investigator is expected to take the lead role in the conduct of the research project. The Principal Investigator will also normally be the person who makes decisions about allocation of the grant budget and hiring of research personnel.

Funding for a grant is dependent on the continuing employment of the Principal Investigator over the period of the grant.

Exceptional Circumstances

Exceptional circumstances might include illness or parental leave and in all cases documentation outlining the exceptional circumstances will be required.

Individuals who have delayed commencing, or had a significant interruption to, a research career after a PhD due to involvement in health practice or industry, may also apply claiming exceptional circumstances. Such individuals will need to make a strong case regarding the number of years in which they have been 'research active' and also demonstrate that they are on a career development trajectory (and not already established).

On the other hand, investigators without a doctoral degree who have already built a substantial research career (e.g. multiple publications, prior grant support), should not *a priori* consider themselves eligible for a "Young Investigator" grant.

8.2 Co-Investigators

Co-Investigators are researchers who will be playing a central role in the project, based on their experience and expertise. Non-Australian researchers and researchers based overseas are eligible to be Co-Investigators on a Young Investigator grant. It is assumed that Co-Investigators will not be drawing salary from a Young Investigator grant.

8.3 Associate Investigators

An Associate Investigator (AI) is an investigator who provides intellectual input into the research and whose participation may warrant inclusion of their name on publications.

AIs are ineligible for salary support from a PCFA Young Investigator Grant.

There are no restrictions on individuals who may be named as an AI on PCFA Young Investigator Grant applications.

9 Application Process

9.1 Application Forms

All applications must be made on the form provided by the PCFA. The application form can be found at the Research section of the PCFA web site:

<http://www.prostate.org.au>

Completed forms must be submitted electronically by the advertised closing date.

9.2 Withdrawal of Applications

Applicants may withdraw an application at any time through their Administering Institution's Research Office.

9.3 Incomplete, false or misleading applications

Once submitted to the PCFA, the application will be considered final and no changes will be accepted.

The application is the prime source of information available for assessment. As such it must contain all the information necessary for assessment of the project and the investigators without the need for further written or oral explanation, or reference to additional documentation, including the World Wide Web. All details in the application, particularly concerning any successful grants, must be current at the time of application.

9.4 Removal of Applications

The PCFA reserves the right to remove any applications that are clearly non-competitive or ineligible from further consideration in the peer review process. Exclusion of ineligible applications may take place at any time during the selection process under the following circumstances:

- the application is inconsistent with the objectives of the PCFA;
- the application contravenes or is inconsistent with PCFA Grant Policies and the relevant guides for the completion of application forms;
- the application does not address the selection criteria; and/or
- the application includes any incomplete or misleading information.
- the application does not adhere to the guidelines for Young Investigator grant proposals

The PCFA will not make a research grant to any researcher who:

- is an applicant for, or is in receipt of funds from, the tobacco industry or organisations deemed by the PCFA to be associated with the tobacco industry, regardless of whether the funds are received directly, through collaborators or by other means (for example, the Smoking and Health Research Foundation of Australia is deemed to be associated with the tobacco industry);
- is employed in a research institute or organisation or, in the case of universities, faculties or schools that allow applications or receive funds from the tobacco industry, whatever the use of those funds may be; or
- is employed in a University that accepts funds from the tobacco industry for health-related research or services, wherever in the University that research may be done or those services supported.

The PCFA will terminate its support for a research project if the above provisions relating to support from the tobacco industry are breached or it believes that the integrity of the research is threatened by influence from tobacco interests.

9.5 Closing Dates

The availability of Young Investigator Grants and the opening and closing dates for applications are advertised nationally each year, and will be posted on the Research Section of the PCFA web site (<http://www.prostate.org.au/>). Late applications will not be accepted.

10 Peer Review

Each Young Investigator Grant application will be reviewed by the PCFA Research Committee.

A reference shall be requested from the nominated mentor and a second referee nominated by the applicant (from a different institution) attesting primarily to the suitability of the Principal Investigator for support, and also to the quality and feasibility and international competitiveness of the research proposal.

Members of the Research Committee may request external review of applications which are felt to be outside the expertise of committee members

The criteria that the Research Committee will use to assess a Young Investigator Grant application relate to three general areas:

- **Is the Principal Investigator (the "Young Investigator") someone who is likely to mature into a successful, independent scientist with an interest in research on prostate cancer?** Does the PI have a mentor who can aid in the development of their career?
- **Is the project significant and innovative and can it be completed successfully?** Does the proposal address a question of considerable clinical or scientific significance, specifically with respect to prostate cancer? Does the project attempt to answer a question that has not previously been addressed, or if previously studied, where the results were equivocal or needing repetition? Are the methods proposed likely to succeed, are the investigators aware of methods that have significant pitfalls and have they offered alternative strategies in these cases? Is the funding requested adequate (or excessive) for the work proposed? Does the proposal address one or more of the key research priorities of the PCFA (see Section 3)?
- **Is the general research environment suitable for the investigator and the project?**

The decisions of the Research Committee regarding funding of Young Investigator Grant Proposals are referred to the Board of the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia. The Board makes the final decision regarding grant funding.

Decisions of the Research Committee and the PCFA Board regarding grant funding are final and are not subject to review.

11 Funding

11.1 Level and Duration of Funding

The Research Committee will assess the level and duration of funding for each project in the context of the significance and feasibility of the work proposed; as such there is not a fixed level or duration of funding provided. However, in general Young Investigator Grants will not be funded at levels above \$125,000 pa, and not for a period of more than four years.

11.2 Personnel

The PCFA Research Committee does not have any specific restrictions on level or duration of funding for research personnel. However, the level of salary funding provided will generally adhere closely to current NH&MRC guidelines.

12 Ethics and other required approvals

Funding for a Young Investigator Grant will not commence until all relevant ethical and other approvals and licences have been received from the appropriate bodies by the Administering Institute, with copies of these approvals forwarded to the PCFA.

13 Outcome of Application

The PCFA will advise applicants, via the nominated Administering Institution's Research Office, of the outcome of the application as early as possible following approval by the Research Committee. The dates when the outcome of the grant review process will be announced, and the dates when funding may begin, will be announced on the PCFA website.

The PCFA will publish the following information on its website for all successful Young Investigator Grants:

- Application ID#
- Principal Investigator
- Administering Institution
- Title of Project
- Total funding awarded
- Other information such as the lay summary may also be published.

14 Administration of grants

Offers will be made by the PCFA to the Principal Investigator through the Administering Institution. The Principal Investigator is responsible for organising and managing the research collaboration and reporting to the PCFA.

14.1 Payments

Payment of funds will be made to the Administering Institution, in response to an invoice, in quarterly instalments in advance by cheque or EFT. Funds must be used only for the purposes approved under the PCFA Research Grant Program.

14.2 Intellectual Property

The PCFA encourages the Investigators and Administering Institution to patent any significant Intellectual Property generated by a research award supported by the PCFA, and also encourages attempts to commercialise same. As a matter of policy the PCFA takes no commercial interest in any IP developed as the result of PCFA funding.

15 Reporting

15.1 Annual Progress Reports and Financial Reports

Annual progress and financial reports will be required within two months of the end of the first year's funding. The progress reports will include (but are not limited to):

- Date of report, title of project, application ID number, principal investigator, associate researchers, institution
- Original goals of the proposal
- Project progress (outlining research progress to date, any departures from the original timeline or challenges or barriers to progress and plans for overcoming setbacks)
- Any publications or presentations arising from the award
- Any additional research funding obtained (for this project or others)
- An audited financial report against the approved project grant budget.
- Justification for funds unspent, to be carried over or returned. Carry-over of funds remaining up to 25% of the grant budget must be justified; funds remaining over 25% will automatically revert to the PCFA.

It is suggested that progress reports be no more than two A4 pages (12p Times Roman type, 2.4cm margins)

The PCFA may suspend payment of further installments of any current grant until the appropriate reports have been received and assessed as satisfactory.

Where an institution fails to submit satisfactory reports, as required, the Research Committee may terminate funding and determine that all or part of the funding must be repaid. In this case, the PCFA may withhold the remainder of the institution's payments under the scheme for the current year or initiate recovery of funding.

At the completion of the grant, a final report and financial acquittal will be required within three months of the end of the grant cycle. The final report should contain the same information as the annual report. Funds remaining up to 25% of the final year's funding may be carried over for up to 6 months, with justification.

15.2 Acknowledgement of Support

Research carried out on awards funded by the PCFA must be acknowledged as being supported by the PCFA Research Grant Program. This includes any publication or presentation resulting from the research. Researchers are required to notify the PCFA in advance of any publication or presentation and researchers must provide the PCFA with at least two copies of any such publication. The PCFA would also appreciate a .pdf file of any posters presented (or an A4 or A3 hard copy if a .pdf is not available).

Recipients of a PCFA Young Investigator Grant may be asked to participate in media or other publicity events relevant to the Research Program.

16 Further information

Enquiries about Young Investigator Grants may be addressed to Ms Samantha Stewart, PCFA Research Grants Coordinator:

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